



dobsonfly

representative species

Kingdom:	Animalia
Division/Phylum:	Arthropoda
Class:	Insecta
Order:	Megaloptera
Family:	Corydalidae

Features

Dobsonflies undergo complete metamorphosis (egg, larva, pupa, adult). The larva (hellgrammite) is large, growing to three inches long. It has a stout body with eight pairs of pointed filaments along the edge of the abdomen. The abdomen ends with a pair of short, hooked prolegs that are used for grasping. It absorbs oxygen through its body surface or gills. It is a predator with chewing mouthparts. Hellgrammites are characterized by six legs, one pair of short antennae, brown to black coloration, and a large, dark plate behind the base of the head. The adult male has long, tusk-like mouth parts which are about three times as long as the head. They may be used in self defense and in courtship. Adult males may be three to five inches long.

Natural History

Dobsonfly larvae are aquatic and live under stones in streams with slow-moving water. Adults are found near streams. The female dobsonfly deposits eggs on vegetation over water. When the eggs hatch the

hellgrammites fall into the water. Hellgrammites remain in the water one to three years before leaving to pupate under a rock or other object along the shore. The adult lives only a few days after emerging. Hellgrammites are predators on insects and other invertebrates.

Habitats

interior rivers and streams

Iowa Status

common; native

Iowa Range

statewide

Bibliography

Iowa Department of Natural Resources. 2001.
Biodiversity of Iowa: Aquatic Habitats CD-ROM.